

Cheek
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Back to Africa



The mission card of the Rev. Landon N. Cheek.



A portrait of Cheek's bride, Rachel Chilembwe Chimpele.



MacFord Chipuliko, his wife, Rose, and daughters.



Landon Cheek and his wife Phyllis at home in Limbe, Malawi.

'Miracles' help a black family here unravel history to find kin in Malawi

By John M. McGuire
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

SPREAD OVER the dining-room table is material linking Margaret Durham, her sister, Eloise Robinson, and all the others in their large American family to a martyred African patriot in a land far away.

Documents, records and photographs join generations of black people related through the blood of a Baptist minister from Mississippi and the daughter of a Yao tribal chief from what was British East Africa.

The marriage of the Rev. Landon N. Cheek and Rachel Chilembwe Chimpele in Africa in January 1902 set in motion this extraordinary tale of an African-American family. Its telling is appropriate as Black History Month begins later this week.

"I think this would be a good article for Black History Month," Durham wrote the Post-Dispatch, "because as you are probably aware, it is very difficult for a black person to find their relatives in Africa because of slavery. The census records prior to 1870 list blacks as slaves under the owner's name. The only other identification is primarily their sex and their age."

"Through contact with my relatives in Africa, I have been able to trace my family tree well beyond 1870."

The story began at a time when the winds of change were blowing. After a native uprising against British colonial rule in 1915, John Chilembwe, Rachel Cheek's uncle, was executed, thus becoming a national hero of the new nation of Malawi.

In a way, it is a story best told through the eyes and facial expressions of Durham and Robinson as they recount their discoveries, made through genealogical records kept by Mormons and the Baptist Mission Board in Philadelphia, through the knowledge of a woman in Fernandina Beach, Fla., and through the writings and research of George Shepperson, a British scholar in Edinburgh, Scotland, who met their great-grandfather and wrote about him.

Durham, the younger of the sisters, is the most animated, the most likely to become rapturous as she talks of what she calls a miracle.

"To think of it," she said, referring to one piece of the puzzle. "My husband James' primary-school teacher in Fernandina Beach wrote a book about Emma DeLaney, a missionary who went to Africa with my great-grandfather."

"For 21 years, I've been going to Florida, and that town is no bigger than this room — you could spit from here and hit everyone in the town — and Willie Mae Hardy Ashley didn't know I was a Cheek. I could see her porch from the in-laws' place."

Ashley's book, "Far From Home," details the experiences of Emma DeLaney in Nyasaland, British East Africa. DeLaney helped Landon set up the Providence Industrial Mission in Africa, the very one now run by Durham's African cousin, MacFord Chipuliko. DeLaney was from Fernandina Beach.

"She didn't know I was a Cheek!" repeated Durham, speaking of Ashley. "And then when she told me that this other author was still living, I could have screamed. I would have, if I hadn't been at work. George Shepperson has letters from my great-grandfather and through one line he took a 'missionary' which was the name of the..."



Kevin Manning/Post-Dispatch

Eloise Robinson (left) and Margaret Durham with "Malawians to Remember, John Chilembwe," by D.D. Phiri.

"And he was asking about Ella Mae Harris, my grandmother, who was born in Africa. Well, I had to brush my hair because it stood straight up. It brought tears."

For Shepperson, who once taught at Roosevelt University and the University of Chicago back in the late 1950s, his interest in east central Africa began in the Second World War. As an English lieutenant, he was in command of a company of the King's African Rifles, many of them Nyasas, who fought the Japanese in the China-India-Burma campaigns.

"I spent three years with the Nyasas, many of them from the Yao tribe, like John Chilembwe and his niece, Rachel, Landon Cheek's wife," said Shepperson, speaking by telephone from his residence in Edinburgh. "So that was the start of everything."

With a fellow academic, the late Thomas Price, Shepperson wrote a book called "Independent African," which was really about John Chilembwe and "the origins, setting and significance of the Nyasaland native uprising of 1915." It was published by the Edinburgh University Press in 1958 and has gone through three reprintings.

"Mr. Cheek was sympathetic (to the goals of independence from colonial rule), and very properly so," Shepperson said. In his book, Shepperson cited passages from some of Cheek's letters, which certainly raised the suspicion of the European colonists. At one point, Cheek published in the Richmond (Va.) Planet an article critical of British rule in central Africa. It was reprinted in the Central African Times.

Landon N. Cheek's Life With The Lions

EXCERPTS from a St. Louis Globe-Democrat interview with the Rev. Landon N. Cheek almost 81 years ago show that the African missionary was a first-rate storyteller. This is not at all surprising to two of his great-granddaughters, Margaret Durham and Eloise Robinson, who say that Cheek also could produce "thunder and lightning" from the pulpit.

"On days when he preached, there were traffic jams outside the church," Robinson said.

Photocopies of the article, which appeared on Sunday, July 12, 1908, were given to Margaret Durham by Charles Brown, head of reference for the Mercantile Library Association, the repository of the old Globe files. The newspaper met with Cheek two years after he and his Nyasa bride, Rachel Chilembwe, came here from east central Africa.

Sadly, she died in the United States in the influenza epidemic of 1917, at the age of 32. Cheek, born in Canton, Miss., in 1871, lived to be 93. He died in 1964.

The story is illustrated with a headline — "Adventures of a St. Louis Missionary in Darkest Africa" — that is worked into various photographs and drawings, including an inset of Landon Cheek, photos of humpback cows of east Africa, British East African women cleaning coffee, an Angoni chief, Cheek's big-game trophy case and a sketch of the mission house being destroyed by lions.

"I heard a roar behind me and another to my left," the caption reads. The subhead says: "Life in a Land Where Leopards Crawl Under the Bed and Lions Are Annoyingly Inquisitive."

The lead-in to the story of Cheek's experiences in Africa is remarkable on two counts: Its wonderful, breathless introductory sentence, and an aside about the changing world that was closer to what is happening in Africa now than the writer could have imagined.

"Now that the world is getting to be such a pitifully small place, with lightning-speed steamers, electric trains and air ships of the Zeppelin variety, one is reduced to the last extremity to find a place that is far enough away to be interesting."

"News from such a place has just been brought to St. Louis by the Rev. L.N. Cheek, who went from this city to British East Africa some seven years ago under the auspices of the Baptist Mission Board. Even Blantyre, that station in the savage wilds, named in honor of Livingston's birthplace in Scotland, is doomed to be dragged out into the commonplace world very shortly, now that the Dark Continent is being cut across by steel rails."

Cheek's mission was 20 miles from Blantyre, 250 miles inland from the Mozambique Channel.

In the interview, Cheek was asked what form of locomotion he used

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Cheek
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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Family

From page one

hoe-handle about 1½ feet in length and digs in the earth, making his hills for corn and beans, we cannot expect him to dream of heaven and a higher ideal. When the village hut life is broken up and the government will run schools with some of tax money used for standing armies and imperialism, we can hope for a great change.

"Will we really hope for this change from any other race (but the Negro)? Can we expect the foreigners in Africa to plead for higher wages and more education while they still sell barter goods to natives and get the majority of them for 75 cents per month?"

"Is there no power to save? Who will make a move for justice and mercy?"

In another letter, Cheek had said: "My English friends (?) were eyeing me as a veritable hornet who within 30 years would incite the natives against English rule. To the last day of our long and weary years, they tried to trump my every move, even to build up our station, hoping that any day I would be discouraged and return to the U.S.A."

The mission files of the National Baptist Convention, in St. Louis when Cheek left for Africa and now based in Philadelphia, show that the minister did get discouraged. In a note to a "Dr. Jordan," Cheek wrote: "Sorry to say, the crops are poor and as a result of same a famine has been on. Thus you will see how very necessary it is that our brethren in America send us money to help relieve the situation and keep things on foot."

"All of us have been sick, very sick, and I thought at one time we would lose both our babies, also Brother Chilembwe, but God is very near and says, 'Live on.' I hope to start for America in June. Pray for us and write us soon."

As he had feared, the Cheeks lost a daughter, Ada, before returning to St. Louis from Africa. She died in 1903.

In 1959, when Shepperson was teaching in Chicago, he had a series of "long, fascinating interviews" with Landon Cheek, who then was living with his African-born daughter — Durham and Robinson's grandmother, Ella Mae Harris, known as "Brownie."

Like the circumstances behind much of this story, Shepperson found in roundabout fashion that Cheek was living in Chicago.

Because he was one of the early scholars in the study of blacks and their role in world history, Shepperson was interviewed by the Chicago Defender, the major black newspaper in the city. As part of the interview, Shepperson asked the newspaper to print an appeal, asking to hear from anyone who knew the whereabouts of a former African missionary, L.N. Cheek. And that is how they met.

"The photographs from Africa and the letters were fascinating," Shepperson said. "Unfortunately, I was never able to find the diary kept by Rachel Chilembwe Cheek, in the Yao dialect. But there were photos of Cheek baptizing Africans, as Rachel and John Chilembwe looked on."

"He had on his sideboard a portrait of Rachel. And by any standard, black, white or striped, she was a beautiful woman. And he was quite militant. It was really remarkable what Cheek and DeLaney did, going right to the center of the country."

Shepperson, who is retired from Edinburgh University and in 1986 studied at Harvard University's W.E.B. DuBois Institute, has corresponded with Durham and has of-

fered to assist her in a biography she would like to write about her great-grandfather.

"What's even stranger is that she found her relatives in Africa," he said. "These kind of contacts between Afro-Americans have been too long neglected."

Even though both women knew their great-grandfather, they were young when he died in 1964, and the significance of the stories of Landon Cheek in Africa never came into focus until they began their research into the background of the Malawian drive for independence.

When Durham got a long-distance phone call from Willie Mae Ashley in Florida, telling her how to reach Shepperson, Durham said she almost fainted. "The blood rushed from my head. When I found out this man (her great-grandmother's uncle, John Chilembwe) led a revolt, and 900 of them died, I just couldn't believe it."

"When grandmother (Ella Mae Harris) would talk about this, we'd have to unball her fist, she'd become so angry," Robinson said. "We always knew her mother was an African and great-granddad was a missionary, but we didn't know my great-grandmother's uncle was a martyr."

"Her dream was to go back. She had such vivid memories of the old country."

Robinson, 51, and Durham, 41, recall that their great-grandfather was a character.

"He would pop up anytime and take over your conversation," Robinson said. "He used to scare my boy-friends, standing there and singing 'How I Love Jesus' in Yao. Each morning, you'd find one of his (missionary) cards under your door, like a calling card." The card included the beginning of the Our Father in Yao, "Wetu Wese Jua Mli Mwinani."

"He would take out his false teeth and scare us to death," Durham said. "He was also thrifty, like the Scots."

Robinson chuckled. "When he died, his mattress was filled with checks and cash. And this is the same man who would send you to the store with \$5 and tell you to buy a leg of lamb, bread and greens."

One of the letters from an African cousin, among the first sent to the 6500 block of Perry Court, Velda Village Hills, made Durham cry. "When you come here, you will walk through history," said MacFord Chipuliko of Chiradzulu, Malawi.

"I can't wait to go over there," Durham said. "He's sending me a dictionary so I can speak some Yao. Grandmother kept in constant contact with him. When she died in 1985, he was so taken with grief."

A snapshot of Chipuliko and his family — wife Rose and daughters Alleney and Susan — is placed next to a tinted portrait of great-grandmother Rachel Chilembwe Cheek. Chipuliko's face and the faded visage of the woman seem identical, establishing in Durham's mind a strong family link.

In her letter to this paper, Durham outlined the significance of what she had found. When she was told how Shepperson had located her great-grandfather, she smiled and shook her head. "That's just something. That's just fate, like all this. It's so exciting."

"My grandmother never tried to contact her relatives in Africa prior to this because she believed they were killed during the uprising," Durham wrote.

"I am presently corresponding with another cousin in Malawi and we hope to have him come here in March of 1989 to visit our family." (The same cousin was here in 1979, studying for the ministry in Nashville, Tenn.)

Through persistence and luck, Durham and Robinson were able to find their African "brothers," as MacFord Chipuliko and MacDonal Chapunga, of Limbe, Malawi, insist they be called.

Although they are more like cousins, Shepperson said that in Africa "brothers" is the appropriate term. The Chipulkos' Celtic first names are the legacy of Scottish missionaries.

Not only has her digging turned up relatives in Africa, but it also has put her in touch with an uncle, Edgar A. Cheek, Landon and Rachel Cheek's 77-year-old son, who lives in Lake Elsinore, Calif. Edgar Cheek outlined for her the family history in Africa, "average temperature 120

degrees." He told her of their African cousins, who he said "knew your grandmother, Brownie."

"I have no knowledge of my uncle's children," Edgar Cheek said. "My grandmother was Cherokee and taught me to write. She was a seamstress, cook, you name it, and could handle a double-barrel shotgun like Wild Bill Hickok, but that's another story."

Co-workers at the Army's Aviation System Command on Goodfellow Boulevard, where Durham is a program analyst, have followed her progress in uncovering the family tree. They have taken to calling her "Queen Margaret," what with her kinship to the daughter of the Yao chief, her great-grandmother's father.

One woman at work who had been teasing Durham about her preoccupation with family mentioned that she had found African ancestors, and that some of them were concubines. "I said to her, 'Your relatives were carrying my great-grandfather.'"

It was the death of her father last September that really started Durham on her genealogical journey, going through the stacks at libraries and writing letters at a furious pace.

His name was Chapel, which is close to Cheek in library microfilm. An excerpt from one of the books she found, "Malawians to Remember, John Chilembwe," by D.D. Phil, mentioned that Landon Cheek had been approached at one time "by some disaffected Yao chiefs..."

Cheek

From page one

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Cheek

From page one

The missionary laughed.

"About the most luxurious that you could imagine. The vehicle is a hammock, and it is carried suspended by poles on the shoulders of two or four men, according to the weight of the passenger and the roughness of the road. The position is a horizontal one, and if you are not particularly interested in the scenery, you put in the time sleeping."

He likened the hammock-transit system to the old stagecoach lines, with relay stations set at intervals.

Then the interviewer asked Cheek how he managed to "come back alive, thinking of the Interior of Africa as a very savage and dangerous place."

"If you mean, as I take it you do, that the danger was from the natives themselves, I must say you have a popular conception of those people, which is altogether wrong. I never knew a more thoroughly peaceful, hospitable and amenable people than the members of the Yao tribe, and that is the largest tribe in British Central Africa. (Cheek, of course, married a Yao woman, Rachel Chilembwe.) They are the most thoroughly moral people in the world, I am convinced. And they are as honest as they are moral."

— John M. McGulre

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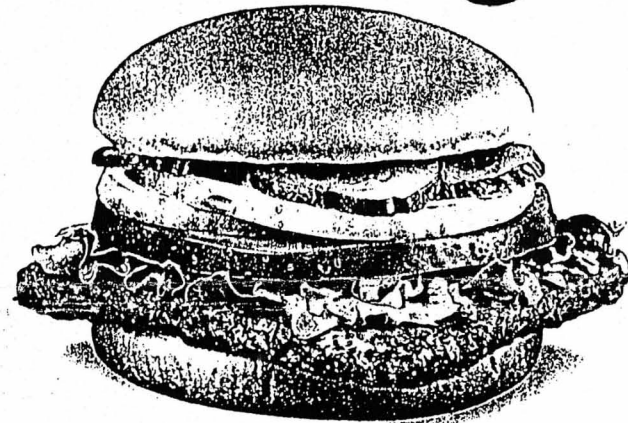
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Pascagoula Public Library
Local History & Genealogy Department
Cheek Family History

Mrs. Durham's ancestor, ~~Robert~~ Cheek, was a slave on the land of Robert Simon Cheek (1770-1841) and wife, Mary Isenton Oulton, in Warren Co, NC. 6514 Perry Court
St. Louis, MO 63121 (Mrs. Durham's address)
8 May 1992

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Dear Mr. Allen,

I hope this letter finds you and your family feeling well and enjoying the best of health. Thank you every so much for all the interesting newspaper articles. I certainly enjoyed receiving them and sharing them with my friends. Please forgive me for the delay in replying to your letters. I have had to travel a lot lately for my place of employment. I am glad I finally had time to sit down and write to you.

I wrote to Mrs. Sakaris, although she said she was not researching the Cheek family, she gave me some excellent suggestions. I hope to follow through on them. She sent me a reference from the Archives. I have enclosed a copy for you. I have a feeling it is the papers you have already sent me. I wonder if you know when William, the son of Robert T. Cheek moved to Mississippi and why he moved. William was a physician in Canton and he lived there until he died. From the information I have, it looks like Robert Cheek also died in Canton. I wonder what could have happened to make both of them move to Mississippi.

I was at the Mormon Family History Center located here in St. Louis last night. They have a computerized ancestral file that is just great. I keyed in Robert T. Cheek and it gave his whole ancestry. It was wonderful it gave the names of two ladies in Virginia that furnished the information. I think I will submit my ancestor's genealogy for entry into the system.

Here is all the proof I have of my African ancestry. As I told you on the telephone. Rev. Cheek was one of the first Black Missionaries to be sent to Africa in the early part of this century. While he was in Africa, he married an African named Rachel Chilembwe. They had three children in Africa, one of which was my grandmother, Ella Mae. Rev. Cheek returned to America in 1906, bringing his African wife and children with him. An uncle of Rachel named John Chilembwe, led a revolt against the British in 1915, after which he was brutally murdered. Our family in America lost communication with the ones in Africa after that. However, in 1977 a nephew of Chilembwe earned a scholarship to study Theology in America. He sought the assistance of the Foreign Mission Board in finding any surviving members of the Cheek family; however they were not successful. Rev. Cheek had died in 1964 and his wife Rachel had died in 1917. The Foreign Mission Board did not know the whereabouts of my grandmother, Ella Mae. It was not until two years later that a missionary that knew my grandmother was able to put Chilembwe's cousin in touch with my grandmother and ultimately our family. The relationship between our families is rare and when I give talks about it, I always refer to it as "Reverse Roots," we didn't find our roots, our roots found us.

RALEIGH
NORTH CAROLINA STATE LIBRARY

Sincerely,
Margaret J. Durham

ENCLOSURE

check 5

OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

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MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
VITAL RECORDS

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ADDRESS <i>Canton Miss</i>																																																																																

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE CERTIFICATE ON FILE IN THIS OFFICE.
Form V. S. No. 1. 12-11-16-17

Alton B. Cobb, M.D. November 27, 1989 *David Lohrlich*
Alton B. Cobb, M.D. STATE HEALTH OFFICER David Lohrlich STATE REGISTRAR

WARNING: It is illegal to alter or counterfeit this copy.



Pascagoula Public Library
Local History & Genealogy Department
Cheek Family History

1. PLACE OF BIRTH

County of St. Louis
Wardship of St. Louis
Village of St. Louis Registration District No. 25 B File No. _____
or _____
City of St. Louis, Mo. Primary Registration District No. _____ Registered No. 9457
1710 1/2 Division St.
18 Ward.

Birth occurs in a hospital or other institution,
name of same, instead of street and number.

FULL NAME OF CHILD Katherine (Faty) Louise Brown

Sex of Child <u>F</u>	4. Legitimate <u>yes</u>	5. Twin, Triplet, or other? <u>To be answered in case of plural births only</u>	6. Number and in order of birth <u>1</u>	7. Date of birth <u>7 20 21</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)
FULL NAME <u>William Brown</u>	FATHER		FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Ella Mae Cheek</u>	MOTHER
P. O. ADDRESS <u>1710 1/2 Division St.</u>	14. P. O. ADDRESS			
COLOR OR RACE <u>B</u>	10a. AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>21</u> (Years)	15. COLOR OR RACE <u>B</u>	15a. AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>18</u> (Years)	
BIRTHPLACE <u>Miss</u>	10. BIRTHPLACE <u>East Africa</u>			
OCCUPATION <u>Shoe-shining</u>	17. OCCUPATION <u>Shoe</u>			
Number of child of this mother <u>1</u>		19. Number of children, of this mother, now living <u>1</u>		20. Born at full term <u>yes</u> (This Child)
at antiseptic was used in the eyes? <u>yes</u>				

21. CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE*

I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was _____ at _____ M.
on date above stated.

(Born alive or stillborn)

(Signature) O. S. Treba

*When there was no attending physician
midwife, then the father, mother, house-
holder, etc., should make this return.

Given name added from supplemental report _____, 19____
Address Barre St.
(Physician or Midwife)

23. Filed Aug 5, 1921

Registrar _____ Registrar _____

This certificate must be FILED with the Local Registrar within TEN (10) days after birth.

23rd Psalms

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and they
staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth
over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Amen

Acknowledgement

The family would like to thank their many friends for all ex-
pressions of sympathy and acts of kindness extended to them
during this time.

Thank You

Interment

Washington Park Cemetery

Services Entrusted To

Wade Funeral Home

G & O. Printing Shop

October 10, 1904

April 21, 1985

**Precious Memories
Of
The Late**



Mrs. Ella Mae Harris

Thursday, April 25, 1985

11:00 a.m.

**Unity Chapel Church
5250 Thekla
St. Louis, Missouri**

† † †

**Rev. James Owens,
Pastor and Officiating**

Obituary

The late Ella Mae Harris was born October 10, 1904 to Landon N. and Rachel Cheek in Blantyre, Nyasaland, E. Africa. She was a member of the Yao Tribe. Rev. Cheek and family moved to Canton, Mississippi on April 13, 1915.

Joined Pleasant Gift Baptist Church in Canton, Mississippi under the leadership of Rev. Louis Moore. Joined Pleasant Green Baptist Church in 1920 under the late Rev. J.K. Parker.

She married William Brown in 1920 and from this union one child was born, Katherine Chapel who preceded her in death.

In 1935 she joined Mother Mitchell's Temple of Christ, Ella Mae worked faithfully.

She was ordained a minister under Mother Cornelius Mitchell.

Rev. Ella M. Harris worked closely with the Civil rights movement during 1935 thru Mississippi. During her ministry she met and married Rev. Melvin D. Harris, they traveled extensively doing the work of the Lord.

In 1947 she joined Unity Chapel, one of the first Adult members of the Church. Served as President of the Ministers board for years. A member of the Mothers Board. A member of the Sunday School and a booster of all the Young Superintents.

She leaves to cherish her memory; one son-in-law, nine grandchildren, 1 brother, 2 nephews, a host of great grandchildren and numerous other relatives.

Order Of Service

Processional

Scripture

Prayer

Selection..... Mass Choir

Acknowledgements..... E. Irving

Condolences

Obituary

Selection..... Mass Choir

Eulogy..... Rev. James Owens

Viewing of Remains

Benediction

Wade Funeral Home - In Charge

Psalm 121

*I will lift up mine eyes until the hills
From whence cometh my help.
My help cometh, from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.
He that keepeth thee will not slumber
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper; The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil;
He shall preserve thy going out and
Thy coming in from this time forth,
And even forever more.*



John Chilembwe in America : probably taken between 1897 and 1899

INDEPENDENT AFRICAN

John Chilembwe
and the Origins, Setting and Significance
of the Nyasaland Native Rising
of 1915

★

BY GEORGE SHEPPERSON
AND THOMAS PRICE

EDINBURGH
The University Press

check
8

THE FIRST WAVE OF ETHIOPIANISM

Chiradzulu area but through the neighbouring district of Mlanje into the Catholic Portuguese territories, and in some cases, it seems, as far afield as the Rhodesias.⁴⁰ New teachers were added to the mission, amongst which were Chilembwe's nephew, Morris, who went down in the 1915 Rising, and his elder brother's daughter, Mary Chimpele. A start was made on a women's movement, in which, though Miss DeLany was the major influence, Mrs. Chilembwe played some part; and weekly sewing classes—possibly with sewing machines, a great native luxury at that time—were established in several quarters. Regular forms of social life were springing up at the P.I.M., and the celebration of Christmas was on its way to becoming a recognized feature of the mission's life, with *nyama* (meat—another great luxury in an area that was often touched by scarcity of food) and games, to which the Africans in Chilembwe's following could look forward. At his mission, indeed, small though it still was, a corporate feeling and pride was emerging. It was, by the time the American Negro missionaries had been there for two years, simply the Providence Industrial Mission, or P.I.M. as it was coming to be known popularly. The more restrictive prefix, 'Ajawa' (Yao), had been dropped from its title. Chilembwe was now preaching in the *lingua franca* of the Shire Highlands, Nyanja, and his appeal was clearly being made to the widest circle of Africans that he could find.⁴¹ The corporate feeling that was growing up at the P.I.M. at this time must have helped by providing Chilembwe with a firm base from which he could extend his activities.

By 1904 this corporate spirit and pride had become recognizable. Miss DeLany expressed it very well in a letter to the women of the National Baptist Convention in America who had financed the first major brick building to be erected at the mission. She wrote:

If I may compare the place to-day with the place two years ago, I would say that . . . we have already reached a degree of civilization. In front of the house where one year ago only stumps, thorns and crooked trees were growing you will find to-day scarlet geraniums, a few blooming roses and other flowers, while the red leaf hedge forms the walks and divides the yard into squares. On either side of the walks in the back yard the thick soft grass that was planted in December has covered the place and the red hedge around it gives the appearance of a green velvet arch square with a red border. This with a few flowers gives the back yard a pretty appearance. Beyond the kitchen where the tall grass flourished and was burned each year simply to come up again, I had

PROVIDENCE INDUSTRIAL MISSION

about an acre and a half of cotton planted. Certainly it is not growing nor bearing yet, but it makes the place look neat. . . . To the right of the house a few hundred yards were dilapidated huts and another field of grass, trees, etc.; to-day you will find a brick church, certainly not a very handsome building, for architects here are self-taught, and native labour very crude, but nevertheless God's Temple reared to his glory.⁴²

With its cotton, the P.I.M. had no greater success than many of the other planters of the area. But the fact that it was planted at all was a measure of the mission's aspirations. Indeed, by 1905, Cheek and Chilembwe had experimented with coffee, tea, pepper, and rubber, as well as cotton.⁴³ Chilembwe was preaching to his congregations that they must be prepared to work with their hands in the new society, and was obviously exerting all his energies to emulate the white industrial missions. A detailed economic history of the mission does not seem possible, but there is some evidence to indicate that, although the P.I.M. had fewer resources to fall back on than the European missions or estates in times of climatic or economic fluctuation, it managed to struggle along in face of economic difficulties. Furthermore, it had the advantages over the European missions that it had means of subsistence culture, a staff which, on the whole, was brought up in that tradition, and less alien supporters to persuade that their subscriptions were producing quick results. What figures exist for the mission's growth suggest that, for all the initial enthusiasm of its founders, its development in terms of actual members was small in the early years—105 in 1905—though this, of course, is no guide to the ramifications of its influence.⁴⁴ Chilembwe and his American Negro helpers seem to have concentrated at this time on building up the permanent stock of the mission rather than on going for quick, initial enrolments which would fade away hastily afterwards. If this is true, it suggests that Chilembwe, unlike his old master, Booth, was not over-ambitious at first, and contented himself with building on small but secure foundations.

Thus, by 1906, the two American Negro missionaries, in their five years in British Central Africa, had helped Chilembwe to create a promising little mission.⁴⁵ Cheek, indeed, had become closely attached to the Chilembwe family. He had married Chilembwe's niece, Rachael, and had become the father of three children, one of whom, Ada, died in Africa. Both he and Miss DeLany had learned the local vernacular, and had built up their own little personal